
The Exponent

Spring 1993

The Exponent, Spring 1993

Students of Cedarville College

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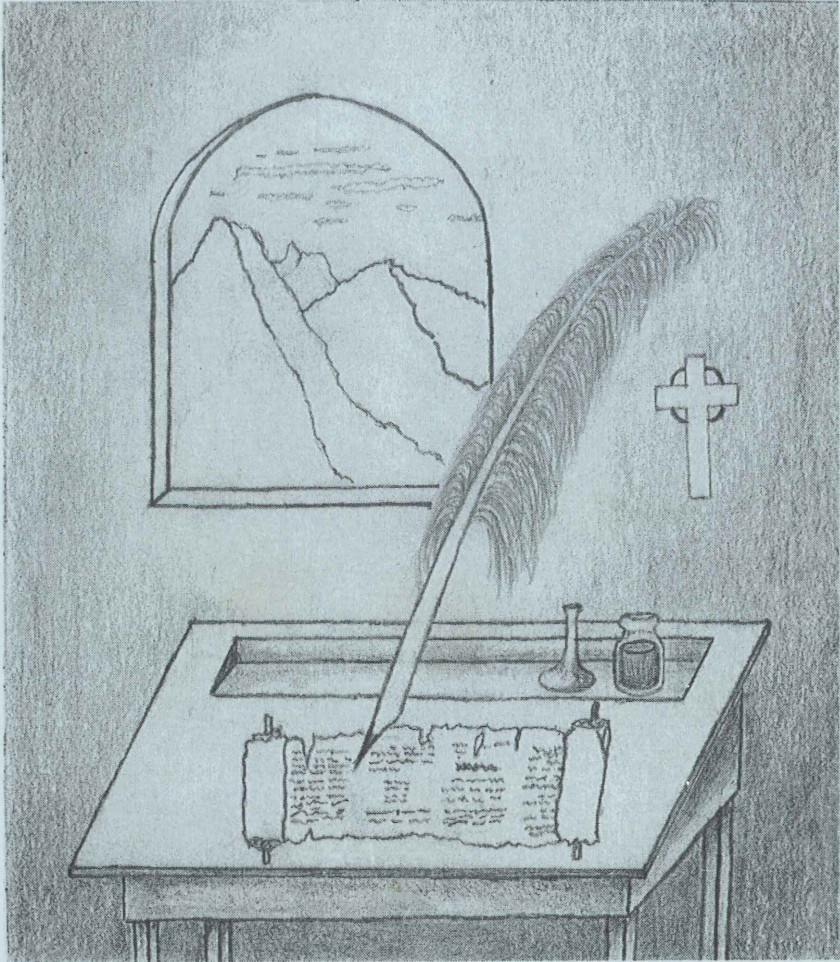
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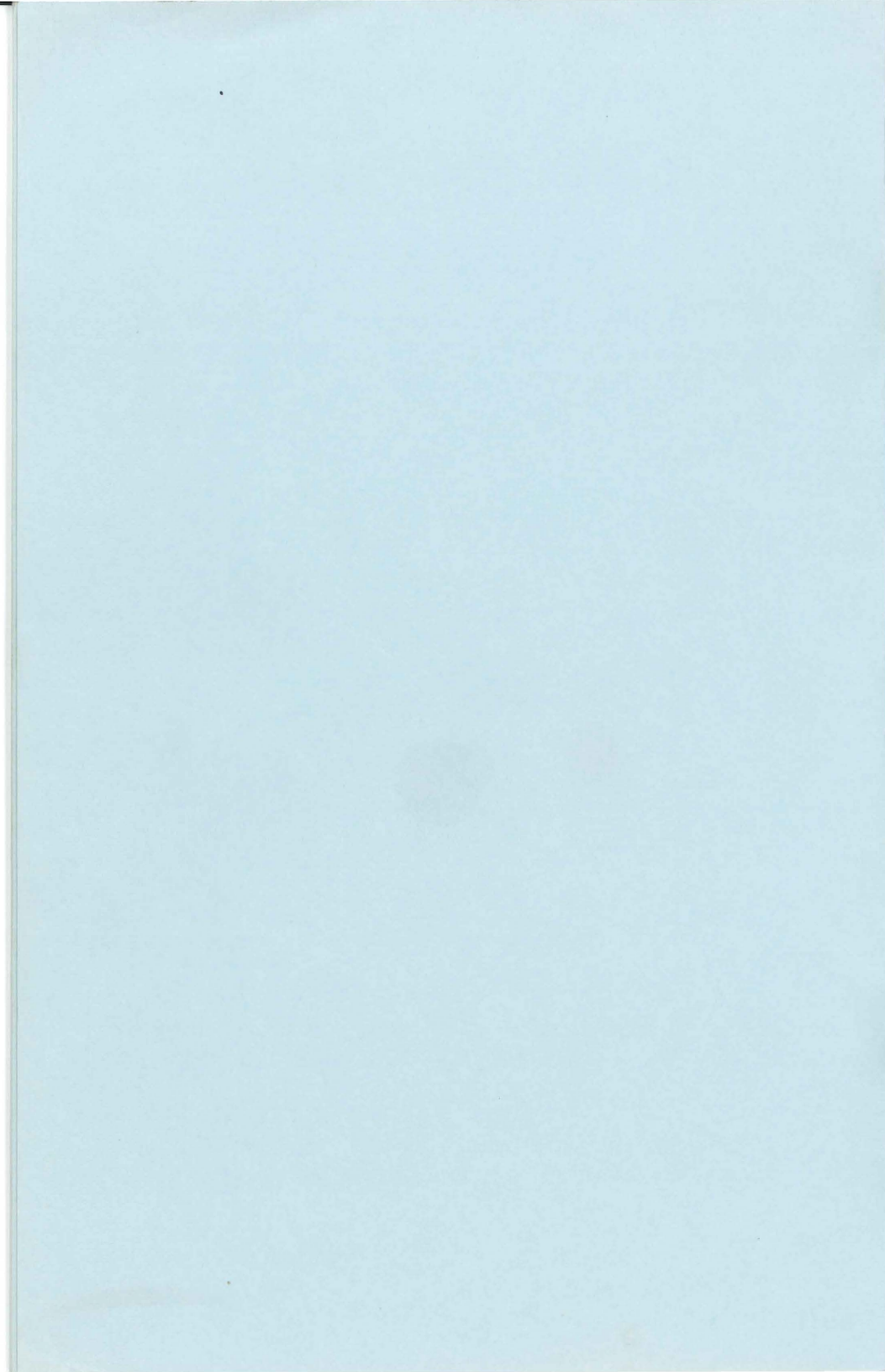
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The Exponent



**AN INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW
AT CEDARVILLE COLLEGE**

SPRING 1993



The Exponent

Spring Quarter, 1993

Table of Contents

Untitled.....	1
a poem by Tod Patric Hamilton	
Clockworks.....	2
short fiction by Floyd Black	
Northern Lights.....	6
a poem by Randall J. Fleenor	
Graduation Day.....	8
short fiction by Chad Grayson	
Understanding.....	14
a poem by Christopher P. Eckart	
Industrial Park.....	16
short fiction by Jonathan Varner	
Scenes of Harshness.....	20
poetry by Donald Erickson	
Book Review:	
<i>Luther's English Connection</i> , James E. McGoldrick.....	24
reviewed by Brent T. Luman	

The Exponent

An interdisciplinary review at Cedarville College

Volume 1, Number 2

Spring Quarter, 1993

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The Exponent thanks Andrew Biddle for laying out this issue for publication. His time and effort are greatly appreciated. *The Exponent* also extends its appreciation to the Student Government Association of Cedarville College and to Tau Delta Kappa for their financial support of this publication.

Cover art

Christopher Ehlers

UNTITLED

I uncap my pen
and raise the shades of sleep
pawing back the lapping waters
of helplessness.
I do not sleep
but instead struggle to create
from mountain strewn bedclothes
and valley tossed covers.
the surface life of words
and seaweed snarled visions
flitting to and fro between
the day's receipts and the day's fights
the boat falters
and the pen falls uncapped
to drown among my bedclothes
leaving the boat unmanned.

- Tod Patric Hamilton

CLOCKWORKS

by Floyd Black
(short fiction contest winner)

“Roxy Music?” He offered. One hand was digging through a leathered brown paper bag filled with an assortment of tapes, while the other hand hap-hazardly kept the black Lynx speeding between the white and yellow lines. “Uh,” the car swerved slightly as he looked down to identify another tape. “Roxy Music?” He laughed at himself, tossed the tape back in with the others, and re-aligned the car. “How about the radio, Dog? I wonder what music Kansas-inians listen to?”

He straightened back into his seat and back into the full blast of hot air rushing through the open window. He punched the radio on, and a static-filled assault of Willie Nelson led to his routine manipulation of the memory buttons. Finally, he grabbed a random tape from the clutter under his seat and impatiently shoved it in. Moments later Roxy Music filled the car. Puppy, his giant multi-colored mutt, panted out the passenger window in indifference.

The glare off the asphalt never seemed to move, and its constant presence burned its reflection into Dave’s pale, squinting eyes. He had given up on the black, winged sunglasses hours before, tired of shoving their bent lenses up his sweaty nose. Now that it was late in the day, he was making a half-hearted attempt to eclipse the sun with the rhythmic swaying of his black fuzzy dice.

His white T-shirt, barely caught by the Coach belt about his loose jeans, rippled in the steady force of the wind. He tapped his bare feet restlessly against the accelerator, the floor, and intermittantly, the brake as he drummed his long, bony fingers on the top of the steering wheel, his heavy silver ring producing a satisfying rhythm. He swayed the car back and forth as he sang in a melodramatic vent. “My only love, my only love, only love.” Puppy barely twitched an ear in acknowledgment, his quivering nose intent on the rich smells of a summer evening coming through the open window.

More than anything, Dave hated moving. Moving required

so much organization, energy, and forethought. At best, he had tossed all of his worldly possessions into the tiny car - Puppy, his stereo, every CD and tape he had encountered the morning he left, an arm-full of 30x33 well-worn jeans...had he remembered his green suede jacket? By now, he was closer to the University of New Mexico than home. Hopefully, the over organization of Lisa, his father's girlfriend, would cover the gaps in his planning.

The full meaning of his actions hadn't hit him yet - leaving home after eighteen years. He was leaving behind Hannah, his little sister and clone who would be six in December already. And he was leaving his mom, whom he rarely saw as it was, and of course, his Pop. Now, Puppy was his only tie to home. Hannah would really miss the overgrown pup, and Dave would miss watching her. She was known for unabashedly hoisting her tiny dresses over her head and chasing after Puppy with a squeal. Now she would only have the two cats as entertainment: Jackie, the stray cat whose ears had remained tiny as a result of frostbite, and Butch, the unfortunate alley cat who had mysteriously lost half of his tail. The cats would both be crouched on the front porch right about now, waiting for his car to appear out of the passing traffic as it had for the past three months when he had come home from work each day. Dave had never been fond of cats, and, if asked, would probably still give a passionate speech about their uselessness, but even so, this odd twosome had found a soft spot in him. Yeah, he thought, he'd even miss those cats. He sighed as he realized that he wouldn't see 6213 Cobb Creek Road until well into December, when snow would bury its two stories.

A silent pause as the tape flipped brought his thoughts back to the speeding pavement. An approaching gas station caught his eye, and he decided to stop even though his tank was still half full. If nothing else, Puppy could use a short walk.

He had to dig beneath dog dishes, tape cases, McDonald's embroidered napkins, and empty coke cans before finally coming up with the sunglasses, that had managed to sift to the bottom. Their frame still bent, he slid them onto his face and stepped out of the car into intense heat and humidity. He leashed the dog, stretched, and slowly wandered over to a patch of grass. Puppy failed to extend this same image, however, peeing on the flag pole as soon as Dave looked away.

He saw an old-modeled, black Ford parked off to one side of the dusty, crumbling parking lot. Already, he felt like a complete foreigner. This was a far cry from the personalized license plates and obnoxious car alarms of his own neighborhood. Most likely, no one within miles had ever heard of Roxy Music.

After packing Puppy back into the car, Dave straightened his T-shirt and ran his hands over his short brown hair. Stuffing his feet into his navy Jack Purcells, he wandered into the station.

"Uh, six dollars on pump . . ." He looked back at the two pumps out front.

"Black car, son?" the plump, elderly man offered, despite the fact that there was only one car outside. "That's pump number two." His friendly voice, carrying the soft hint of an accent, wavered slightly with age. Dave stared at the watery blue eyes a moment. He heard the loud tick of an unseen clock as it counted off the passing seconds in a lazy cadence. Everything seemed to be too slow. He dug six wrinkled singles out of his jeans and pushed them across the stained counter.

"Thanks," he mumbled, turning to push out the door and back into the heat.

As he was pumping the gas, he watched the sun as it prepared to disappear behind the horizon. He thought briefly about taking a picture of what was turning out to be an incredible sunset, but realizing that he'd have to find his camera, he quickly dismissed the idea. The tall grass across the road shimmered in brass waves and seemed to reach to the edges of the earth. How could there be so much nothing? Looking about the vast emptiness, Dave felt so in-control of his life. Just the idea of crossing the country by himself, the thought of leaving everything familiar and safe, the independence and FREEDOM of going to school so far away was a complete rush for him. Things would definitely be different. He wondered about the desert climate he was headed for. He had heard that it didn't rain much there and that the weather was beautiful all year around - what more did he need to inspire his study of art?

But Dave knew that he would miss fall - the climactic, colorful explosion of leaves and the crisp-weather adrenaline rush that came with it - and the moody weather of Michigan that only

made him appreciate a sunny day all the more. His heart started to pound as a thousand images of home sped through his mind. He saw his pond in the winter - snow covered, still, and silent under the glare of a full moon. He saw Hannah bounding off the school bus with all the enthusiasm of the world. He saw his bedroom outlined in anything dark and in the perfect disarray of an afterthought. His mind raced as the gas pump clicked off. Four months was a long time.

Puppy, noting Dave's still silence, whined with impatience and Dave focused on the furry head panting out the window. "Hey boy! We'll be back before you know it."

He climbed back into his car, thinking to find a new tape before he left the gas station. Five minutes later, he was shoving The Velvet Underground in and skidding back onto the empty highway. He wasn't a mile down the road before he tossed his sunglasses back onto the floor.

from **Northern Coast Diaries**
Ontario, Canada

Northern Lights

The sun has left us behind the trees
And the winds have lost their breath
To places less remote and immaculate as here,
Where the sand-covered swells lap in rhythm
to the bellowing of the loon.

There is no nearer nearness,
For destiny has determined all between us
And the northern lights, in heavenly realms,
Whose starshine rains solitude through
The interlaced foliage,
make my heart equally willing.

Not often enough have I spent an intimate
Night in a strange earth such as this
To know not how it looks during the day,
And less of its past,
and even less of its future.

Its northwind washes through my bones
Making leaves quiver on their stems
And the pale mist stings my nerves
As it settles gently on nature's floor,
Sending me apart with its season
 while the earth, which bore me, is still green.

Who can speak of that dim path we've traveled thus far,
For water's edge and mother's corner we did not need?
And celestial springs and autumns have no marks of respect.
I have seen the infinite landscape beyond the window
And remembered the intimate visions of infinite beauty
 to be woven in my heart...

The sun has left us behind the trees
And the winds have lost their breath
To places less remote and immaculate as here.
Where the sand-covered swells lap in rhythm
 to the bellowing of the loon.

- Randall J. Fleenor

GRADUATION DAY

by Chad Grayson

Driving the dirt roads of rural Indiana after a spring storm is a little like hiking uphill on a sand dune. You can still get where you're going, it just takes a lot longer. James usually avoided taking his car onto unpaved, wet roads, but today was a special occasion.

It had already taken him half an hour to drive ten miles, and so it was with little surprise that he felt the road give way one final time and deposit him on the edge of a ditch.

Through his windshield he could see two big brown eyes investigating him. They scanned his vehicle, and searched him out, staring as if to ask "why." A long low "moo" soon followed and cows number two and three joined cow number one. James had managed to deposit himself just across the ditch from Old Man Rheinhold's cattle pen. The three cows chewed their cud, eyes centered as if they were watching the lottery show on TV and wondering if their numbers matched.

James opened the door to see how bad the situation was. It was bad. His wheels were sunk nearly halfway into the ground, hubcaps so splattered with the thick, grainy muck that he could barely make out the Chrysler insignia in the center. Unless he could hook Bertha, Bessie, and Beulah up to a tow rope, he wasn't going anywhere.

The center cow mooed again and nudged herself against the fence, eyes following James as he moved along the length of the car.

"I know, I know," James responded.

There was a bright spot. The cemetery he'd come to visit was only half a mile down the road. He might never be able to leave, but he could still do what he'd come to do.

James retrieved a bundle of flowers from the back seat and began to trudge down the road, waving goodbye to the Moo triplets as he did.

The grass in the graveyard glistened in the post-storm sunlight. The sky was clearing. The breaking clouds swept eastward, leaving the sky clean behind them. The air smelled of spring, mildly

perfumed by the wall of evergreens swaying in the wind along the cemetery's western border.

Tombstones sat, row by ornate row, backed by a hedge of trees. Between the tombstones and the road was a black iron fence, with sharp twisted points thrusting heavenward as if looking to the time when the graves would break open and their charge would be taken from them. The fence stood waist high, unbroken but for an opening that encompassed a small gravel road just wide enough for one car. The narrow, muddy-grey road cut the graveyard in half.

James walked the grassy edge of the road, careful not to sink his black leather shoes too deep in the mud. He wondered what his mother would have said if he'd told her where he was going after church. She'd assumed that he'd gone to the lake with his friends, as he usually did on Sunday afternoons. What would she say if she knew he'd come to visit Matt? Did she know what this day would have been?

James walked the rows, past granite angels, wooden crosses and simple stone slabs with flowers slowly fading to dust in front of them. It didn't take him long to find the one he wanted, a simple brown granite slab with a lamb chiseled in the lower center of the face. He knelt in front of it despite the wet grass and laid his flowers down. He traced with one finger the inscription.

Matthew Edward Garrett
Son of Edward and Annette Garrett
December 12, 1974 - February 17, 1975
Safe in the arms of Jesus

It was May 29. "Happy Graduation Day, Matt"

"I know it's been too long since I've been here, but you're not really here anyway, so it's probably not all that important to you. A lot has been going on. Wish you were with us, but...well, anyway. My sophomore year of college is over. I made the Dean's list all three quarters. Mom and Dad were happy, of course."

James sighed and rubbed his wet hands on his thighs to dry them, glancing around to make sure no one was listening to his monologue.

"Beth's getting married this summer. That feels strange.

You and she would have been the same age. But it looks like the first one to get married out of all of us cousins won't be the oldest, because my prospects don't look very good right now. But I'm not here to mope." James talked on, all about the local gossip, of his friends who were getting married or breaking up, some who had new jobs, some who were dropping out of school or going back. There wasn't that much news, Ashford Lake wasn't a big town for scandal, and James wondered why he was telling his brother all of it anyway. None of it mattered.

He didn't wonder long before the thoughts he wanted to share came back again. He fell silent, and his hands clenched into fists. "I can't talk about that one, Matt. It's not fair to you."

"He's not really there, you know." The voice was an odd mixture of sugar and gravel, thrusting itself through the paper-thin shell of his monologue. James looked up and saw the sweet, wrinkled face of a woman looking down on him.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, but can I help? You seem disturbed," she said.

James stared up at her. She wore a modern cut creme colored dress that had ornate pearl buttons on the front and a hem that fell midway between her knee and ankle. A matching purse hung from one crossed arm. Her hair was white and bushy atop her head, and kind, burning blue eyes captured his own.

"No," he responded. "I'm not disturbed."

She smiled. "Young man, your knuckles are white, and your mouth is in such a frown... what do you have to be so distraught over?"

James thought about asking her if she realized that they were in a graveyard, but didn't.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"James," he replied. "James Garret."

"Hello, James Garret. I'm Essa Ashford."

Essa Ashford? He stood as he recognized the name. This was the Old Lady of Ashford Lake. The only surviving member of the family that had started the town. This was Indiana royalty!

He brushed the mud from his knees and extended his hand. Essa took it, despite the particles of wet soil that clung to it. When

she'd let go, James noticed the mud and brushed his hand off on his pant leg, his face turning a deep crimson.

"Don't be nervous, James." She laughed, and that only embarrassed him more.

She looked past him, to Matt's headstone. She sighed, "This one," and leaned a bit to read it. "I've seen this one before. So sad, only two months old. I assume you're his brother?"

James nodded, a bit uncomfortable with her intruding into his visit.

"I must admit that I was listening a bit, but you didn't see me."

"I don't mind," James lied.

"So what is it that you can't tell him?" She got right to the point. Whether it was age or authority or status that gave her such boldness he didn't know. What he did know was that from her sweet old voice, he really didn't mind the question. But he didn't want to answer it. His eyes told her that. What was he to say? That he was mad at his brother for dying? That he was tired of constantly wondering how life would have been different had Matt lived? In a way, James had left a little more of himself, of his potential and zeal for life, at every visit to the headstone. There was more of James in that grave than there was of Matt.

She looked at the inscription on the headstone, and again at James. "Would you mind if I told you a story, James?"

He nodded. "No, I wouldn't mind."

She sighed and began. "I was in love, once. His name was David Goldstein and I went to school with him. We planned to marry. But when my father found out, he threatened to disinherit me, because David was Jewish and my father was very much a bigot." She smiled at the strength of her words, as if it were a truth with which she'd come to terms long ago. "I was young and idealistic and said that it didn't matter, that I didn't mind losing my family's fortune if I could only have David. But David wasn't as sure. It wasn't that he wanted my money, it was that he didn't want to rob me of it. If only he'd known it really didn't matter."

She blinked back the edge of a tear and continued. "The hesitation cost us. It was in the middle of World War II, and David was drafted. I wanted to marry before he left but he wanted to wait.

And so we waited. He was dead less than a year later, and the danger of my disinheritance was ended. My father pretended grief, but I knew better. Within another ten years he was dead and the fortune was mine. I hated the money, hated what it had cost. Then something amazing happened, and I found that it had all been for a reason."

James was incredulous. What was she talking about? What did the story of her tragic romance have to do with anything that was going on inside his head? He'd almost decided that she was an old crazy who just liked to tell her story, but then it began to make sense. Her words echoed, "It had all been for a reason."

What had his mother always told him? "I believe that there was a purpose for Matt's death. And I believe there was a purpose in your survival." James had always struggled with the fact that God had chosen to heal James' heart condition, and only two years later he'd let Matt die from the exact same thing. It had never seemed just.

Today would have been Matt's graduation from high school. James and his little brother would have been just now becoming friends. He told this to Essa.

"I guessed as much, from the date on the stone." She coughed and then continued. "It wasn't long after my father died that I found a way to fill David's space in my heart. I was invited to an Easter service by a friend, and all the puzzle pieces of my life seemed to snap together. I found a purpose. A few months after that Easter I discovered that I could use the money I had received to support the work of missionaries. Through the fortune I hated, souls could be won. But God had to take David away from me, or his plan would have been marred. I still grieve for David. He's buried over there, and that's why I'm here." She pointed to a stone three over and two rows back. "God had a purpose in your brother's death too."

"I just wish I knew what it was."

"How could you not?" She stared at him, a bit coldly.

"What do you mean?"

"I worked with a woman for the longest time, and her heart was hard against God. She had a baby, and that baby died. Not long afterward she received a booklet in the mail, along with a lovely letter speaking of Christ's healing. The letter bore the signature of Annette Garret. She accepted Christ as a direct result."

“You know about Mom’s ministry?”

“Of course. I’d guess that Matthew’s death has probably birthed other stories like this woman’s.”

“Yes,” James said. “It has.” He thought of them coming to church with the family, long overheard phone conversations with his mother, the supermarket clerk that stopped her when she saw the name written on the check and thanked her for helping her through the death of her little girl. There were many of them.

“God’s plan is good, James. Trust it.” She smiled and placed a hand on his shoulder. “And I firmly believe he had a plan in sparing you.”

It was James’ turn to smile. “Miss Ashford,” he said. “Thank you.”

“You’ll still doubt and wonder, but I’m glad I could help.” She replied.

Thunder rumbled in the distance and the western edge of the sky grew dark. Another storm was coming. James walked Essa back to her car.

“How did you get here without getting stuck?” He asked her as she settled into the driver’s seat.

A mischievous grin caressed her lips as she said with mock severity, “Power, my boy. Four wheel drive power.”

James laughed and asked, “You wouldn’t happen to have a tow rope, would you?”

understanding

sometimes i feel like asking,

“how many hairs do i have on my head today?”

can You not tell me?

would it really change my life?

the curious thought comes, passes, and fades out of sight.

suddenly, again, i am walking alongside the notion.

it doesn't seem as trifling as it once did.

*i **really** want to know.*

i ask again.

can You not tell me?

would it really change my life?

a greater question forms in the pause of unknowing.

then another, and another.

seized in a dance of ravenous thought,

the cryptic questions pour forth--

hurried steps in the lengthy quest of knowing.

was i wrong?

were they right?

can You not tell me?

*would it **really** change my life?*

what of eternity? election? the mysteries of things to come?

the thousand paradoxes the tongue cannot express?

of pain and sorrow? of pleasure and joy?

will it be mine?

will i find rest?

the dance is tiring; the music-- it slows.

Out of the silence echoes The Voice.

Out of the shadows The Colors burst forth.

"To tell would take away your life.

To reveal would deprive you of living."

job 12:12; 6:24

- christopher p. eckart

INDUSTRIAL PARK

by Jonathan Varner

Train tracks run by my house. They haven't been used for as long as I've lived here. On grey evenings, I like to walk down the tracks until I pass under the turnpike, where the grumble of traffic turns into thunder. Two sloping walls support the road and provide a canvas for the local teens. Most of the blurred script has crumbled off and mixed into mounds along with cases of beer, highway trash, and filth. What remains is an indecipherable mess of names and symbols. One word in tall green capitals stands out across the face of the structure: DISILLUSION.

Nowhere else is there enough noise for me to think. In a quiet room, I hear every tiny sound - a fan buzzing, a window creaking with the breeze, my own weight shifting around in my chair, but the turnpike creates a cushion of noise that drowns out all distractions.

Last night I walked beyond the underpass. I needed to mail a letter, and the post office is part of an industrial park which lies about a mile down the tracks.

The train tracks themselves look like any other. Their impossible straightness forms a ladder to the horizon. But I don't walk on the ties that form the rungs. Instead, I balance on a rail - each step is measured, like a Navajo on a skyscraper beam. From years of practice, I can keep a steady pace all the way to the industrial park.

Separated from the tracks by a thin line of trees, a mill yard spreads out into a sparse grey desert of gravel. Piles of stone bulge up ten feet high near the center, encircling the mill like burial mounds. At one spot, a small creek breaks the tree line and the gap frames the mill perfectly. It stands like one of Dali's elephants - squat and boxy on spindly giraffe legs, black against the reddening sky of dusk. Distance and chirping crickets mute the growl of the highway, and an occasional cry of a dump gull is the only sign of life.

That night, a haze sat in the valley of gravel. It aroused a sensation, not of doom, but of boredom, merciless and eternal. As

dreamlike as the mill seemed, the expanse of stony grey denied it any soothing power. The whole mill yard was misplaced. Such an epic cinematic backdrop should be a prelude to a thrill; instead it was surrounded by the suburbs of South Jersey. I continued down the tracks toward my task.

The post office lies on the far side of the park. Wide, fresh black streets flow around immense blocks of buildings, emptying out onto a highway. These buildings are completely functional, aesthetically blank. A *T* or *L* shape appears occasionally, but of such proportion that only one vast length of wall is visible at a time.

Of all the structures, the closest to the train tracks is the most imposing. Faced entirely with red brick, the expanse is unbroken but for three nondescript metal doors at regular intervals. Normally, I don't examine roadside scenery very closely, but this wall was so utterly plain that it forced me to gaze at it, nearly in a state of awe. There was no writing anywhere along it, no signs, no graffiti. Only thousands of identical bricks. The colors were even matched so closely that no variation could be detected in the evening light. Under my feet, the grass was even, newly cut and slightly damp. It edged the wall sharply, with no weeds or dandelion puffs breaking up its lush surface. In vain I searched for a heating vent, a gas pipe, any sign of irregularity. This wall was the summary of all industrial parks - functional, bare, and abhorrent. I could not get past it quickly enough. My last few strides before the corner were nearly a jog, but there it opened up to another road, affording a view of inviting, open spaces.

The rest of the walk was uneventful and seemingly brief. I thought of how wretched it is to work in these plants. If the inside of that horrible building imitated the outer walls, I would go mad with the thought of seeing it every day. I have worked in factories before, and I know the tedium of such an existence. Not only did the same workers greet me from day to day, but the same sounds, smells, and sights (like that awful wall) always dwelt inside the plant. The only way I could partially satisfy my desire for change was to imagine the lives that my co-workers might have led, had they not made the same regrettable decisions that I had. No one, after all, plans to work in a factory.

I reached the post office and mailed my letter quickly. For some reason, I was in a hurry to get home, although I had nothing planned. I was stopped by a woman who needed change.

"Excuse me? Excuse me, you wouldn't happen to have change, would you? It needs exact change and I only have a dollar, you know, I don't want to buy a book, since I only need one stamp."

She was shorter than me, and looked about fifty years old. Her clothes were formal, but not fancy. She was attractive. Only a thin net of grey covered her thick black waves of hair.

I gave her twenty-nine cents, surprised that I had it in my pocket. Thinking back, I don't know if I even spoke to her.

She thanked me and smiled. Her expression conveyed a strange sense of pity, as if she had done me a favor. Gently clasping my arm, she seemed to assure me that things were fine now, no need to worry. Apparently, I appeared to be in need of consolation. It was very unnerving, so I left abruptly.

I was not tired, but I walked home at a more casual pace. The sky was darkening into the thick blue of military uniforms. As I passed each street lamp, my shadow slowly stretched taller into a grotesque willowy figure, growing thinner and thinner until the head touched the next circle of light on the pavement and shot back down to nothing. Then it would slowly grow again. I tried to remember what I had written in my letter, but it only came in snatches of small talk.

Soon I approached the ominous building. Memories of the factory rushed into my mind and a fog of oppression seemed to swell up inside of me, dark and clammy. A chill shivered through me. Suddenly I was brutally aware of my loneliness. I looked up at the razor edge that the black building cut into the deep royal sky. Headlights rose up from behind and rushed past me.

What if I stepped into that road, to run away from that interminable length of solid, stark wall? The asphalt was moist and smooth. Closing my eyes, I longed for a truck to fly recklessly down this street. Late at night, in the middle of a silent industrial park. Maybe the driver would be drunk. I could hear a rising static sound, like a slowly drawn breath: the hush of tires on asphalt. They wouldn't see me until it was much too late. Tires screamed in horror and a thousand voices within and around me cried out in warning.

I felt the cold steel bumper in the small of my back, arching my neck until my head rested on the hood. The impact flung my arms out straight, my knuckles rapping against the head lamps. At that moment, victim and mechanical executioner were one. My body hugged the grill perfectly - not as a door fits a jam, but as a mattress fits a bed. Soft edges mold snugly into the solid frame. The force and pure pain of impact balanced with the comfort of uncanny design to create a ecstatic second at the end of a lifetime of unbearable years. My knees buckled and the truck carried me aloft, flinging me forward onto the harsh pavement.

A shrill horn jolted me awake. Spinning in fear, I dived out of the oncoming car's path into that perfect lawn. Elbows and palms stinging, I hugged the grass. Old rain soaked through my shirt, chilling my chest. As soon as I heard silence behind my wailing lungs, I stood up. The wall faced me directly. A stream of light seeped through the trees behind me and fell, at eye level, on a single brick. With a cry of true despair, I bolted until I was beyond its reach.

SCENES OF HARSHNESS

by Donald Erickson
(poetry contest winner)

I. Reality Check In a Mobile Home

husband - wife - children
& the american dream
living in a mobile home
where the heat
becomes trapped inside.

father works - mother works - children work
business man wallows as he says from his BMW:
“work never hurt anyone...it’s good for you
someday it’ll pay off, did for me”
“well, i guess it doesn’t pay too soon enough?”

postman stopped by -
everyday he comes with
advertisements - religions - bills -
no one here can afford united
states postage stamps.

policeman stopped by -
 didn't come in for coffee (or donuts).
 a summons for an unpaid
 health maintenance bill was freely given
 and taken by the loss of a man's pride.

firemen stopped by -
 the stagnant heat
 transformed into flames
 upon a mobile home
 in a trailer park.
 totally humbled father
 feels human's oldest invention -
 his creation for a way out

husband - wife - children
& the american dream
dead in a mobile home.
the heat remains stagnant.

II. Hope Faith Allsfair

Hope Faith Allsfair looks out the window, as
she washes dishes.

The snow - falling like
the water through the
drain - cleanses the
winter air.

In her mind's ears
she hears her two boys
play.

But intently her heart
waits for a miracle that
she knows will come.

She reads the
horoscopes.
They told her today that
it is on its way.
They seem to say the same
thing everyday - day
after day after day. But
the heart needs to grasp
onto something.

Her son Someday
colors rainbows red,
blue, green, orange, and
yellow with a black
crayon, while his brother
Reality cries in the dark
snow.

Hope Faith Allsfair
writes her son who
escaped from the loving
home, but not from its
sorrow.
The letter states:

Someday, oneday
you're going to be rich

Love,
Mom

BOOK REVIEW

Luther's English Connection. McGoldrick, James E.
Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979, 200 pgs.

Reviewed by Brent T. Luman

The sixteenth century Reformation had its beginnings with Martin Luther in Germany. However, was Luther solely responsible for the revolution that followed? What forces stimulated the spread of the Reformation? Specifically, what brought the disturbance from the European continent to create such a stir in England? How did reform cross the channel? *Luther's English Connection* gives the answers by dealing with two people: Robert Barnes and William Tyndale. These two men, influenced by Luther, carried the fires of reform to their home, England.

Luther's English Connection gives a biographical background of Tyndale and Barnes and then proceeds to deal with the pertinent Reformation questions of authority, God and humanity, salvation, the church, and the state. The conclusion reached is that, although some differences existed in their individual positions, Tyndale and Barnes were, in fact, basically in agreement with Luther's Protestant theology.

At the heart of the Reformation, and therefore at the hearts of Martin Luther and his English supporters, was the issue of Scripture. The Reformers held that the Bible alone is sufficient for finding the truth of Christianity, and that it should be made available for the common person to read. However, the Medieval Roman Catholic Church held a vastly different view. To her, scripture was indeed an authority for moral and doctrinal instruction, but equally important was a body of church rules compiled over the centuries, regulations called canon law. This law was made up of Scripture, the writings of church fathers, and the decisions of councils and popes. The Bible was an important document, but certainly not the *sole* authority, and definitely not to be used by the common person. In fact, in 1409, as a result of the recent Wyclif translation, a convocation of the English Church banned the translation of

Scripture and the reading of any translation, lest the common use of Scripture result in an outbreak of false doctrine.¹

Thus opposed, the Reformers entered battle with the church over this issue of the importance of Scripture. William Tyndale gave his life's work to the cause, and Robert Barnes made it the subject of his eloquent arguments against the Medieval Church.

William Tyndale, known by bishops and the king as "the gravest menace to the established order of things,"² carried the spark of hope for an English translation of the Bible - a spark ignited by John Wyclif. At Oxford University, Tyndale's main interest was the study of the Scriptures. As a tutor at Little Sodbury Manor, Tyndale started his quest: to translate the Bible into English. His occupation allowed opportunity to debate with established church leaders. In these debates, Tyndale firmly held that the truth could be found only in the source documents of Christianity: the Bible itself. "The Scriptures," he said, "conferred together, expound themselves."³ Tyndale became increasingly fierce in his accusations against clerical ignorance and corruption. A charge of heresy made Tyndale only more outspoken. "I defy the pope and all his laws,"⁴ he proclaimed.

Tyndale unsuccessfully sought support for his translation from the Bishop of London, and then spent a few months with a merchant friend before finding it prudent to move his work to Wittenberg, Germany.⁵

In 1525, Tyndale had the first edition of his New Testament ready for printing.⁶ King Henry and the Bishop of London denounced Tyndale's work as heresy, and the Bishop personally tried to prevent its distribution. However, his plan backfired. Buying and burning a large number of New Testaments, the Bishop served only to increase the publicity of the translation, pay for the expenses of printing, and fund a revision.⁷ In 1534, Tyndale produced his revised New Testament, including few changes in the text, but omitting many controversial, polemical marginal notes.⁸

Tyndale was hunted down and burned at the stake in 1536.⁹ His writings and his translation, which could be commonly understood, remained as his great accomplishment.

Robert Barnes, the other major figure in this book, was a strong advocate of translating the Bible into a common language so

that all could read it. He attacked the English bishops, saying, "How can Antichrist be better known, than by this token that he condemns the Scriptures and makes it heresy and high treason against the king's grace for laymen to read holy Scripture?"¹⁰ Barnes accused the clerics of keeping men from a knowledge of Scripture in order to hide their own hypocrisy; he taunted, "The truth was there in which you could not abide for men to know... I say to you, if you do not amend it shall be to your everlasting damnation...."¹¹

Barnes used the Scripture itself to argue his point. Since Jesus sent the Pharisees to the Scriptures, it was ludicrous that the Church denied the use of the Scriptures to sincere Christians.¹² In addition, the Scriptures were originally addressed to common people, and contained examples of laymen preaching from the Old Testament, so why can only the clergy have them?¹³ Finally, II Timothy 3:15-16 says that all Scripture is useful to train and instruct in righteousness, yet the church considered this training heresy.¹⁴

Barnes appealed to the Roman Catholic Church Fathers to add weight to his argument. He quoted St. Augustine regarding the Scriptures: "They shall know in them what to do, and what not to do."¹⁵ He also quoted St. Athanasius: "If you wish that your children shall be obedient...give them the words of God," and, "...you shall not say that it belongs only to religious men to study Scriptures; but...to every Christian man...."¹⁶ Now it was not just the heretic Robert Barnes calling for the common use of the Scriptures, but also men revered by Barnes' opponents.

Barnes blamed England's problems on its people's ignorance of the Scripture. This ignorance he, in turn, blamed on the Church, since it had banned a translation into the common language. Since the 1409 ban, translation had been left as the sole responsibility of the bishops,¹⁷ and Barnes was relentless in attacking them for entirely ignoring this responsibility.

The papacy had split into three factions during the Great Schism of 1378-1417, and had been reinstated under one pope by the order of the Council of Constance. This had raised a probing question: "Who has the ultimate power, the pope or a Church council?" One hundred years later, Barnes went beyond that question and proclaimed that popes, councils, Church Fathers and

scholars were all subject to the authority of Scripture. Barnes held that since the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God was the same as the words of Scripture. “To take away the scriptures from the laymen is as much as to take Christ away from them,”¹⁸ he concluded.

Robert Barnes and William Tyndale carried the message of Protestant Reform across the channel to England. Their cause lay in a book: the Bible. It was their foundation, their authority, and at the heart of the Reformation one could hear their rallying cry: “*Sola Scriptura!* Scripture alone!”

“All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God stands forever.”
Isaiah 40:6b-8

In *Luther's English Connection*, McGoldrick presents a well researched, easily read background to the lives of Robert Barnes and William Tyndale. The book provides a good understanding of the issues for the first time student of the Reformation. The emphasis on the authority of the Scriptures is especially important as the foundation of the church today, and the reader is presented with this timeless theme. For a more in-depth study of Reformation issues, one could consult the multitude of references McGoldrick himself used.

The men under investigation were not superhuman saints, but real life men with their own faults and shortcomings. McGoldrick did not try to paint a rosy picture when the facts revealed thorns, and his extensive use of source documents provides credibility and ample evidence for his arguments. Well-written, factual, and easy to read, *Luther's English Connection* provides a solid basis for understanding the Reformation.

Endnotes

1. James McGoldrick, *Luther's English Connection* (Milwaukee, Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), p. 58-59.
2. Philip Hughes, *A Popular History of the Reformation* (Garden City, New York, 1960), p. 152, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 35.
3. William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue*, ed., Henry Walter for the Parker Society (Cambridge, 1850), p. 249, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 37-38.
4. McGoldrick, p. 40.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 45-46.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
10. Robert Barnes, *Whole Works*, p. 282, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 60-61.
11. *Ibid.*, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 61.
12. McGoldrick, p. 61.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
15. Barnes, *Whole Works*, p. 288, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 62.
16. *Ibid.*
17. McGoldrick, p. 63.
18. Barnes, *Whole Works*, p. 289, as quoted in McGoldrick, p. 65.

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